

# 21st Legislative District Survey 2002



**Representative  
Mike Cooper**

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**Representative**

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## **Committees:**

Financial Institutions &  
Insurance (Chair)  
Transportation (Vice-chair)  
Agriculture & Ecology

# Focus on Transportation

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's time for state leaders to stop talking and *do* something about transportation. The gridlock on our roads and highways is the direct result of years of gridlock in Olympia.

People understand this: Anger over years of inaction is one reason why local voters decided to end the 49-49 tie in the House of Representatives by electing Brian Sullivan. Rep. Sullivan is already showing he will be a great addition to the 21st District legislative team. You can be sure that he, Sen. Shin and I are united in our determination see a statewide transportation plan pass *this* year.

This newsletter focuses on traffic, but I'm also working on other issues important to your family. I was recently selected as the new chairman of the House Financial Institutions & Insurance Committee. I'm certain we can strengthen the rights of consumers in insurance, banking and credit without harming businesses, and my chairmanship will reflect this commitment. One of my first goals is to regulate the insurance company practice of using credit ratings to justify insurance cancellations and unfair rate increases (see inside).

Of course, I'll continue working for better schools, public safety, and our local priorities. We have a lot to do in a short 60-day session.

Please take a look inside, and let me know what you think. As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions. Don't hesitate to let me know about your ideas or gripes. The most important part of my job is listening to – and serving – you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Cooper".

Mike Cooper  
State Representative, 21st District



## Transportation priorities for 2002

My top transportation priority is to enact a statewide plan this session – including the revenues to make it work. Lawmakers (and people in the 21st District) are divided over whether a plan should be submitted to a public vote. Personally, I think legislators should be leaders and enact a plan immediately. But if nothing can be passed unless it's sent to a public ballot, I'd support that approach too.

The main thing is to get something done now so we can make progress on critical local priorities. The local priorities I'll be working on this session include:

- **Edmonds Crossing Project:** Bringing passenger rail, ferry service, buses, pedestrians and cars together in one location would make Edmonds a major transportation hub for the county and cross-sound commuters. This model project would create enormous economic gains and job opportunities for our region.

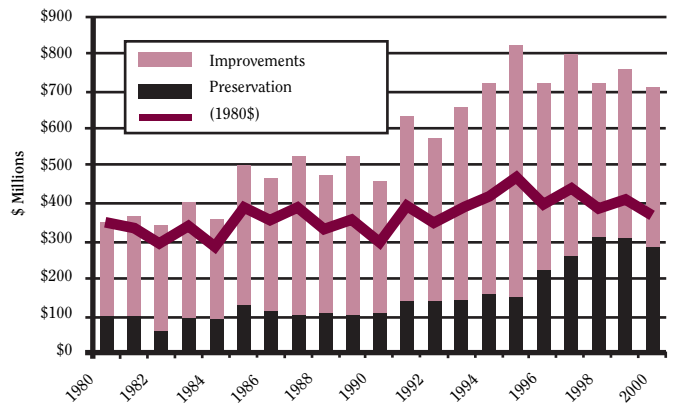
Imagine how different Snohomish County and I-5 would be if you could take a train from Edmonds to downtown Seattle in 14 minutes. I'm working to secure funding to launch the next phase of project planning.

- **Commuter rail:** Completing track improvements needed for fast passenger rail between Seattle and Everett would make a huge difference to people's lives and dramatically reduce congestion on I-5. We lost about \$40 million for the project when I-695 passed, and need a new infusion of cash to get the project done.
- **HOV lanes:** Completing the last leg of HOV lanes between Seattle and Everett would reduce commute times by over 20 percent.

These aren't cheap projects, but the benefits to local families and businesses far outweigh the costs. Improving ferry service and unclogging local traffic choke-points are also high on my transportation agenda for the 21st District.



## WSDOT Capital Outlay - Since 1980



\*Source: Capital Outlay Expenditures in Washington on State-Administered Highways, based on available data, WSDOT, 2001

Total capital outlays directed through the Department of Transportation have remained near 1980 levels (in inflation adjusted dollars).

## Enacting a statewide plan

We've got to face reality. There is no free lunch. Solving the transportation crisis will require additional cash. To his credit, Gov. Locke has already proposed a plan and revenue package that will help focus the Legislature's discussions. Gov. Locke's plan would:

- Raise \$8.5 billion, mainly by phasing in a 9-cent gas tax over 3 years;
- Target funding to high-need corridors (including ours!);
- Give regions more control over their destiny by allowing voters to approve and finance major local projects in partnership with state and federal funds;
- Strengthen accountability and efficiency requirements on the Department of Transportation (*see below*);
- Upgrade the ferry fleet; and
- Spur the creation of over 20,000 jobs.

I realize people don't want to pay more taxes of any kind. But current revenues are simply not enough to keep the system going, much less to fix the problems. Gridlock not only causes the average driver to waste 54 hours and \$930 sitting in traffic each year, it costs Washington businesses roughly \$2 billion in higher expenses and lost productivity. Refusing to pay for better mobility is a bad bargain we can't afford.

## Efficiency, accountability & trust

Restoring public trust in state government is essential to solving the transportation crisis, and getting better value from tax dollars is essential to restoring public trust. To make transportation more efficient and accountable, lawmakers are finalizing a reform package inspired by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, including:

- **Faster project completion**—by hiring more private sector engineers to work with state engineers in order to get projects finished on time.
- **Performance benchmarks**—to allow the public to see for themselves whether they're getting their money's worth on local, regional and state projects.
- **Apprenticeship changes**—to improve job efficiency and opportunities.
- **True cost accounting**—that looks at the *actual* total costs of purchases and projects.
- **Maintenance accountability**—to maximize the useful life of infrastructure.

These and other reforms in the package will ensure better returns on our investments. As the Vice-chair of the Transportation Committee, I'm confident this reform package will be among the first measures we pass this session.

## Standing up for consumers

Imagine a laid-off worker getting a letter announcing that his or her car insurance has been cancelled – not because the bill wasn't paid, or because of an accident, but because the worker's credit score wasn't high enough!

Using people's credit information to justify insurance cancellations or outrageous premium increases is wrong – especially in a state where having auto insurance is mandatory. I've listened to insurance company arguments for credit scoring. But I've also heard from single mom's struggling with their ex-husband's debts, from retirees who are being penalized for paying off their debts, and from people victimized by credit report errors or insensitive credit departments at department stores.

Having listened to both sides, I've decided to take a hard look at regulating the use of credit scores by insurance companies. This will be among my first goals as the new Chairman of the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee.

## Transportation: what *you* said

Thanks to everyone who took time to answer my pre-session survey. We had a tremendous response. I thought you'd be interested in what our district told me, so here are some of the highlights:

Would you support the 'Get Washington Moving' transportation plan? At a cost about \$12 a month per person, mainly from a phased in 9-cent gas tax, this plan would build \$6 billion in highway improvements, finish the HOV system, add nearly \$1 billion in public transit, replace outdated ferries and add more passenger-only ferries and park and ride lots?

**YES - 64%**    **NO-35%**

Do you believe any revenues raised in a county should be spent in that county?

**YES - 60%**    **NO - 40%**

Do you believe all new transportation funds should go to road construction?

**YES - 32%**    **NO - 68%**

Do you believe HOV lanes should be a major part of the transportation plan?

**YES - 60%**    **NO - 40%**

Do you believe that trains and other mass transit should be a part of the plan?

**YES - 81%**    **NO -19%**

Should the legislature pass a transportation funding plan quickly without a public vote, or should a public vote be required before a transportation funding plan is adopted?

**The Legislature should pass it - 52%**

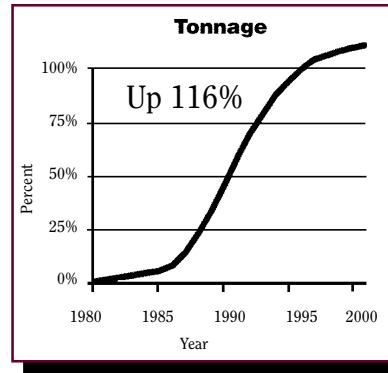
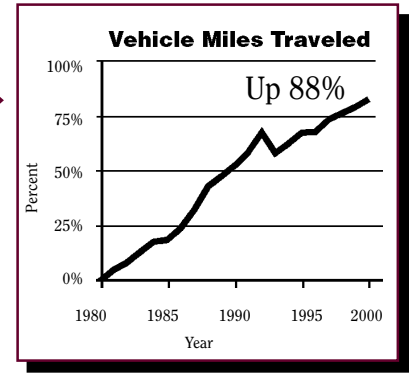
**A public vote should be required - 48%**



"As the new Chairman of the Financial Institutions & Insurance Committee, I'm working closely with Ranking Republican Member Brad Benson on consumer protection and other key issues."



Since 1980,  
vehicle miles driven  
in the state have  
grown by 88%.



Since 1980, the  
tonnage of goods  
and freight moved  
by road in the state  
has grown by 116%.

## Focus on Transportation

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